



LESSON.—MARCH 17, 1907.

Jacob and Esau.

Gen. xxvii., 15-23; 41-45. Memory verses 21-23. Read up the whole story of Jacob and Esau.

Golden Text.

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord; but they that deal truly are His delight. Prov. xii., 22.

Home Readings.

Monday, March 11.—Gen. xxv., 29-34; xxvii., 1-14.

Tuesday, March 12.—Gen. xxvii., 15-29.

Wednesday, March 13.—Gen. xxvii., 30-45.

Thursday, March 14.—Gen. xxxii., 1-21.

Friday, March 15.—Gen. xxxiii., 1-20.

Saturday, March 16.—Heb. xii., 5-17.

Sunday, March 17.—I. John ii., 7-17.

FOR THE JUNIOR CLASSES.

There is a very ugly plant called a cactus. (A picture, or the plant itself might be used to assist in the explanation). Its leaves are thick and ugly, covered with disagreeable thorns. To look at it you would never think that a very beautiful flower could grow on this plant; yet it is so. And not only from an ugly plant can God make a beautiful flower grow, for often he has been able to make a very beautiful character grow up in some heart where the world would think it impossible. Does any one remember about whom we were studying last Sunday? Yes, it was about Isaac, and how he tried to avoid quarrelling. To-day we are to study about Isaac's two sons, Jacob and Esau. The younger son, Jacob, seems to have been a good deal like his father, a quiet man who liked to live at home and look after the sheep and cattle, but Esau, ever since he was a boy, liked to be out hunting and having what he called a good time. God was watching the two boys, and saw which cared most for the highest and best things in life; and just as He can make a beautiful flower grow out of the ugly cactus, He saw that from Jacob's character there would be a chance to train up a true servant of God, while Esau would never care for anything more than himself and his own pleasure. You remember why it was that God led Abraham into Canaan; because He wanted to train up a nation that would serve God only, and not join with the heathen in their sinful worship of idols. But here was Esau making friends of the heathen there were around him, going into all their ways, and even marrying among them. This was a great sorrow to his father and mother, who knew what God had chosen them for.

Explain the customs of the time which made the eldest son the household priest, Esau's indifference to this privilege and Jacob's wish that he might have this, together with the inheritance of the promised blessing of God. Do not fail to emphasize what is, after all, the central point of the lesson,—God's hatred of lying and the punishment Jacob suffered for his deceit even though his desire to possess the blessing was right.

FOR THE SENIORS.

This is one of the most displeasing of all the lessons so far. The favoritism of both mother and father, the rivalry of the brothers, the trickery and greed on all sides, make it disagreeable. Esau had no right to the blessing; he had forfeited that with the birthright so lightly bartered, over twenty years before for an appetising meal; what he feared to lose now that his father was getting old, was the

material wealth which would pass to Jacob should he now be declared heir. For Jacob's action there is no excuse. God had promised him the blessings, and his mean deception of his blind old father in order to get it showed a great lack of faith. It is likely that Isaac and Rebecca were largely to blame for the widening of the breach between the two brothers, by nature far enough apart, through their show of partiality. It seems impossible, too, that Isaac did not know of God's intention with regard to the boys definitely expressed at their birth, nor that he should have been ignorant of the bargain between the brothers; and had not felt in some way that the character of his son was utterly unsuited to the inheritance of the spiritual promise. Rebecca's part is as blameworthy as the rest. She, however, lost her son, and apparently saw him no more. Jacob served a long and hard exile in a strange land, where he was tricked and cheated by Laban in turn. Isaac apparently yielded to what he considered God's will, for he did not seek to reverse the blessing once given. Esau was only saved from murder by his mother's prompt action. It will be enough to pass in review the dark points of this story and spend the rest of the lesson in getting at the light, of which there is quite sufficient when properly studied to banish the first impression, not in the actual verses selected for the lesson story, but in the study of God's dealing with these two men which forms the real lesson. A sermon lately given in Montreal on Psa. lxxxviii., 5., emphasized the wonderful grace of God which could establish a testimony in Jacob, could raise up out of such seemingly unpromising material a witness to God's power and goodness.

(Selections from Tarbell's 'Guide.')

Life and character tend either upward or downward, but a single act or characteristic may not indicate the tendency of a life as a whole. You can make a saint out of the good qualities of bad men; you can make a devil out of the bad qualities of good men. Esau eclipsed Jacob at first, but his virtues were accidents, incidents, without roots, and they withered before the hot tests of life. Jacob outshone Esau at last. Day by day he fought his natural badness, and won in the hard struggle with self. The mean supplanter Jacob became the hero Israel, a prince with God.—Maltbie D. Babcock.

It is not to be held that a wrong thing is approved because it is not in words disapproved. It is simply to be held that the authors of the Scripture stated things as they were,—good, bad, and indifferent.—Henry Ward Beecher, in 'Bible Studies.'

Because a lie is always wrong, one who lies even with good intentions is always injured by lying. Many a man who has deceived himself into believing that there is such a thing as the 'lie of necessity,' and that good can come from a lie that is meant to accomplish good, has found the apparent 'necessity' for such lying increasingly evident. He will now daily tell untruths, or make statements which he justifies as 'constructively true,' when ten years ago he would have deemed it 'necessary' to do so only on rare occasions. Therein is the lie's greatest deceitfulness; it deceives its maker more than any one else. The lie is the surest boomerang of all the weapons that the Devil places in men's hands. To tell one lie with the best of intentions, in order to save another's property, or another's life, or another's soul, is to commence on a course of moral suicide. What God cannot do man had better not attempt.—'Sunday School Times.'

While the truth is always to be spoken, if anything is said, it is not always necessary to say anything. We may feel very keenly about certain matters, and be thoroughly convinced that our view is the right one, and yet have regard to timeliness and the feelings of others in the expression of our opinions. It may not be cowardice at all, but simply the self-restraint which comes from a wise judgment of opportunities and conditions, or a regard for others, that seals our lips. In household life one has frequent occasion to act on this principle. The inopportune declaration of what you think or know, may alienate the

closest friends and sow discords never to be uprooted. It is no defense whatever to say that you spoke what you thought, or that what you said was true. Neither the law of frankness or veracity puts you under any obligation to hurt others' feelings. Paul declares that we are to 'speak the truth in love.' By heeding the qualification, 'in love,' we shall be saved from a multitude of errors. Speaking the truth to put others in the wrong and exult over them, to magnify ourselves, to make others despicable or ridiculous, what a chasm there is between those things and 'speaking the truth in love!'—The Watchman.

(From Peloubet's 'Notes.')

In Jacob and Esau the good and evil are so mingled that at first we might be at a loss which to follow, which to condemn. But yet, taking the two from first to last, how entirely is the judgment of Scripture and of posterity confirmed by the result of the whole! The mere impulsive hunter vanishes away light as air. The substance, the strength of the chosen family, the true inheritance of the promise of Abraham, was interwoven with the very essence of the character of the 'plain man, dwelling in tents,' steady, persevering, moving onward with deliberate, settled purpose, through years of suffering and of prosperity, of exile and return, of bereavement and recovery. On the one hand, fickleness, unsteadiness, weakness, want of faith, and want of principle ruin and render useless the noble qualities of the first; and, on the other hand, steadfast purpose, resolute sacrifice of present to future, fixed principle purify, elevate, turn to lasting good even the baser qualities of the second.—Stanley, in 'The Jewish Church.'

God in no sense approved of the way in which Jacob obtained the birthright. It seemed to Rebekah and Jacob as if God's promise were about to fail, and they must do something to bring the right thing to pass, even if they did a wrong thing in accomplishing it. 'But did God need Jacob's sin in order to carry out his plans? God forbid! The work would have been done infinitely better if Jacob had gained his birthright in God's way and God's time. His sin arose not from faith, but from the imperfection of his faith. 'It was virtually the sin of blaming God for forgetting his promise, or of accusing him of being unable to perform it; so that they, Rebekah and Jacob, had, forsooth, to take God's work out of his hands, and show him how it ought to be done.'—Marcus Dods.

As children of God we all have a birthright far more valuable than Jacob or Esau could dream of. We have promises beyond the range of their highest imaginations. 'The child in a Christian home has for his birthright the Sabbath day, and the Lord's table, and the society of the best people in the city, and first a youthhood, and then a manhood, of purity, and piety, and the service of Christ in His church: "A birthright of truth and honor and honor and chastity."—Alexander Whyte.

BIBLE REFERENCES.

Heb. xii., 16, 17; Rom. viii., 14-17; John viii., 32, Hosea xii., 2; Prov. xii., 19; xxiii., 23; Eph. iv., 25; Psa. cxix., 29, 30.

C. E. Topic.

Sunday, March 17.—Topic—What is success? Prov. iii., 1-18.

Junior C. E. Topic.

THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD'S LAW.

Monday, March 11.—God's law our rule. Ps. cxix., 1-8.

Tuesday, March 12.—God's law our strength. Ps. cxix., 25-28.

Wednesday, March 13.—God's law our delight. Ps. cxix., 33-35.

Thursday, March 14.—God's law our comfort. Ps. cxix., 49-56.

Friday, March 15.—God's law our wisdom. Ps. cxix., 97-104.

Saturday, March 16.—God's law our light. Ps. cxix., 105-112.

Sunday, March 17.—The longest Psalm and its lessons. Ps. cxix., 9-16.